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Letter dated 13 September 2016 from the President of the General Assembly addressed to the President of the Security Council

Over the course of the seventieth session of the General Assembly, I have had the pleasure of working closely with the Security Council and the entire membership of the General Assembly to advance the process to select and appoint the next Secretary-General.

As I near the end of my term, I feel it important to provide a recap of this historic cooperation and some of the details that made this year's process so unique. I also wish to share some expectations of the membership of the Organization with the Security Council as regards the remainder of the process as well as ways to further improve future selection and appointment processes.

The formal process to date

Throughout the seventieth session, the General Assembly and the Security Council worked diligently together to advance a selection and appointment process that is transparent, inclusive and effective, guided by Assembly resolution 69/321.

Monthly coordination meetings with the presidency of the Security Council from the beginning of my term as President of the General Assembly, starting in September 2015, and an opportunity to brief the Council in October 2015 at its open debate on working methods, set the tone for the rest of the session. These were followed by the formal commencement of the process in December 2015 through the circulation, by the President of the Security Council and I, of a joint letter (A/70/623-S/2015/988), formally soliciting candidates for the position, describing the overall process and establishing a clearly defined nomination process — in short, the first-ever job announcement for the position of the world's chief diplomat.

Over the course of the past nine months, 12 candidates have, to date, been presented and their presentations have been jointly circulated to the membership. In line with General Assembly resolution 69/321, each candidate has been provided the opportunity to participate in informal dialogues with the entire Assembly and it is gratifying that all 12 candidates presented thus far have embraced that opportunity.

The dialogues provided the same platform and equal time for each candidate and have been based on a format defined in my letters dated 25 February 2016 (A/70/877) and 29 March 2016 (A/70/878). Candidates were invited to provide a vision statement in advance of the informal dialogue, laying out their vision of the

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challenges and opportunities facing the United Nations and the next Secretary-General. This enabled Member States to acquaint themselves with the overall views of each candidate in advance of the dialogue, and also allowed for short opening statements during the informal dialogues, thereby permitting a more interactive dialogue. Indeed, both individual Member States and groups deserve praise for scrupulously respecting the time provided for questions, allowing equal and balanced access to all and minimizing repetition.

Civil society and the wider global public have also been deeply engaged in the process thus far. Civil society questions, identified through an open and inclusive process, have been an integral part of the informal dialogues, and the use of videoconferences, together with the live streaming of the dialogues, has allowed us to reach people across the world, and for them to reach us. Public engagement has been further enhanced through the use of the official website for my Presidency of the seventieth session of the General Assembly, which has been continuously updated with information about the candidates (presentation of candidatures, biographies, vision statements, and withdrawal letters where applicable) and the process.

In addition, and distinct from the mandated informal dialogues, I took the initiative to organize a global town hall meeting in partnership with the Al-Jazeera media network. Inviting all declared candidates to participate in the debate, broadcast live across the world, brought the process to a broader public and allowed for a more interactive format with all candidates at the same time.

The value of a transparent and inclusive process

The informal meetings with candidates and the overall transparent and inclusive nature of the process to date have been of significant value.

First, through generating some of the best discussions I believe have occurred among the membership about the role of the United Nations and its Secretary-General in addressing our many global challenges, the process has shone a light on the individual and collective aspirations for the Organization.

Second, building on the public participation process for agreeing to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, the process has transmitted a critical message to the wider world: the United Nations wants to hear from you, benefits from hearing from you and is ultimately accountable to you.

Third, the process thus far has demonstrated the capacity of the General Assembly to fulfil its role as envisaged in Article 97 of the Charter of the United Nations, as well as the ability of the Assembly and the Security Council to work effectively together in a complementary fashion.

Fourth, a number of key messages resonated throughout the dialogues in terms of what the overall membership is seeking from the next Secretary-General, messages to which I believe the Security Council must now give due consideration in its own deliberations.

Member States expressed, for example, a clear desire to see a strong, independent and courageous Secretary-General who will make full use of the powers provided for in the Charter. Likewise, a strong call was made to welcome the first-ever woman as Secretary-General and, more broadly, a person who is

committed to ensuring that the United Nations both promotes and embodies gender equality at all levels, a call that I personally support. Through the many questions on substantive, organizational, administrative and financial matters, the membership is evidently looking for a candidate who has the skills to transform the tools, capacities and culture of the United Nations in order to respond to today's major challenges: threats to peace and security; implementation of the 2030 Agenda and the Paris Agreement under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change; greater enjoyment of human rights and fundamental freedoms; and the prioritization of the world's most vulnerable countries and peoples throughout.

Finally, and perhaps most importantly, the revitalized process has significantly improved our prospects of securing the best possible candidate to lead the Organization. We have attracted six male and six female candidates from across three geographical regions, the largest number of formally presented candidates ever nominated for the position. And to date, nine are still participating in the process. Each candidate has strengths and weaknesses and many of those were highlighted through the informal dialogues. Both the Security Council and the General Assembly are therefore entering the closing stages of the process with their eyes very much wide open.

Scope for further improvement

While the selection and appointment process thus far has been significantly improved when compared with previous processes, there remains considerable scope for improvement.

The issue of providing adequate lead-in time for proper preparation and handover to the incoming Secretary-General, for example, could be addressed through the setting of some form of deadline and a more specific timeline for the overall process. For instance, it would seem both desirable and feasible for the membership to commit to concluding the process on entering the final quarter of the calendar year preceding the beginning of the new Secretary-General's term. A commitment to such a timeline would necessarily have implications for the timing of all steps now established as integral parts of the process.

In addition, the new standard of transparency and inclusivity should be seen as the bar, not the ceiling, and should be maintained throughout the entirety of the selection and appointment process. For example, as I have made clear in my statements in connection with each of the informal straw polls of the Security Council, I have been disappointed by the lack of transparency exercised by the Council in its subsequent communication about the straw polls. It is neither respectful of the rest of the membership of the United Nations nor fair to the candidates themselves, for the results to be communicated through leaks from Council members to the world's media.

Lastly, Member States have, in the course of the process, suggested that the General Assembly conduct its own informal straw poll on the candidates who have participated in informal dialogues, before the Security Council starts its own consideration of the candidates, to link into that process. While I find merit in the proposal, it is also clear that no such mandate currently exists. Going forward, it may be worth considering how to establish such an exercise or exploring other ways to ensure that the membership's assessment of the candidates can feed into the selection process of the Council.

The remainder of the current selection and appointment process

The current selection and appointment process has now entered into a decisive phase and there are a number of pitfalls that both the Security Council and General Assembly must work to avoid.

While General Assembly resolution 69/321 allows for the presentation of candidates at any time during the process, through the rounds of informal dialogues, a clear expectation has emerged that any additional candidates should, subsequent to the joint circulation of the letter formally presenting the candidate, participate in an informal dialogue with the General Assembly as a first step, prior to their inclusion in the Security Council's considerations.

In addition, a large portion of the General Assembly has called for the appointment of co-facilitators, preferably before the Security Council reaches a decision on its recommendation, to draft the Assembly resolution appointing the next Secretary-General. While I understand that such a demand is not popular with some Council members, in my view it is entirely consistent with the spirit of transparency and inclusivity with which the process has been imbued to date. Furthermore, the purpose of appointing co-facilitators must be to reach a consensus appointment resolution. At the same time, it is critically important that all Member States commit to ensuring that the next Secretary-General will not be prevented from receiving adequate preparation time before taking office, as a result of wrangling among Member States. In the end, whatever the outcome, the General Assembly must unite around the next Secretary-General.

Fulfilling our joint responsibility

As I conclude my mandate as President of the seventieth session of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the Security Council members for their cooperation on the process during the session.

I hope that the standard of transparency and inclusivity we have established together will be replicated and built on for future processes and extended to other areas of work of both the Security Council and the General Assembly. I also hope that the good cooperation between the two organs on the subject can serve as an example for cooperation on other issues of common concern.

Lastly, as the Security Council deliberates on its recommendation, I sincerely hope that each and every member, permanent and non-permanent, will be mindful of the expectations of the entire membership and the wider global public. I encourage you to do your utmost to fulfil your responsibility to help the General Assembly secure the best possible candidate to lead this great Organization.

(*Signed*) Mogens **Lykketoft**